Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 SAIGON 14031 071139Z

43
ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DPW-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-01 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 IO-04 /062 W
---------- 020404
R 071002Z NOV 74
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 128
SECDEF WASHDC
INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SAIGON 14031

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP, PFOR, VS
SUBJECT: VISIT TO VIET NAM OF VETERANS' LEADERS AND EX-POWS

1. THE US VETERANS' LEADERS AND EX-POWS WHO VISITED VIET NAM FROM OCTOBER 27 TO NOVEMBER 3 EXPERIENCED A MOVING WEEK OF CEREMONY, DISCUSSION AND VISITS WHICH WAS DESIGNED TO EXPRESS THE THANKS OF THE GVN AND THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE FOR US SACRIFICES AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIGHT TO DEFEND FREEDOM IN VIET NAM, AND TO PROVIDE THESE HONORED GUESTS WITH A FIRST-HAND SENSE OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE RVN. THE ELEVEN WERE: JOSEPH L. MATTHEWS, PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER OF THE AMERICAN LEGION; JAMES E. VANZANDT, REAR ADMIRAL (RET), PAST VFW COMMANDER; ESSLEY BURDINE, NATIONAL COMMANDER AMVETS; NEIL G. KNOWLES, NATIONAL COMMANDER CATHOLIC WAR VETERANS; EDWARD D. BLATT, NATIONAL CHIEF OF STAFF JEWISH WAR VETERANS; JERRY R. MONROE, NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION; LCOL. FLOYD J. THOMPSON, USA; COL. GEORGE DAY, USAF; CDR. JOHN S. MCCAIN, III, USN; CAPT. J. V. DIBERNARDO, USMC; AND FSO DOUGLAS K. RAMSEY.

2. THE GROUP WAS AWARDED THE VETERAN HONOR MEDAL, FIRST CLASS, AND THE PSYWAR SERVICE MEDAL, FIRST CLASS, COINCIDENTALLY ON US VETERAN'S DAY OCTOBER 28. LATER IN THE WEEK, AS PART OF THE OFFICIAL
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 SAIGON 14031 071139Z

RVN NATIONAL DAY EVENTS NOVEMBER 1, PRESIDENT THIEU PERSONALLY

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

AWARDED TWO ADDITIONAL MEDALS TO THE EX-POWS. COLONEL DAY AND CDR. MCCAIN RECEIVED THE NATIONAL ORDER, 5TH GRADE, AND THE CROSS OF GALLANTRY. THE FORMER IS ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO THE US CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR. LCOL THOMPSON, CAPT. DIBERNARDO AND FSO RAMSEY RECEIVED THE MEDAL OF HONOR, FIRST CLASS, AND THE CROSS OF GALLANTRY.

3. IN CONJUNCTION WITH PRESIDENT AND MRS. THIEU'S LUNCHEON HONORING OUTSTANDING RVNAF COMBATANTS, THE EX-POWS WERE AWARDED THE TWO MEDALS NOTED ABOVE AND THE GROUP AS A WHOLE HAD A PRIVATE DISCUSSION WITH THE PRESIDENT. THE GROUP ALSO MET WITH PRIME MINISTER TRAN THIEN KHIEM, JGS CHAIRMAN GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN, FOREIGN MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND OPEN ARMS HOANG DUC NHA, SENATOR PHAM DO THANH, CHAIRMAN, VIET NAM VETERANS' ASSOCIATION AND GENERAL PHAN HOA HIEP, CHAIRMAN, RVN TPJMC DELEGATION. AMBASSADOR MARTIN AND OTHER MISSION OFFICIALS MET WITH THE GROUP FOR A TWO-HOUR INFORMAL DISCUSSION AND BRIEFING OCTOBER 29.

4. THE GROUP VISITED FOR BRIEFINGS AND DISCUSSION: THE DALAT AREA, INCLUDING THE NATIONAL MILITARY ACADEMY; THE NATIONAL DEFENSE COLLEGE: THE NATIONAL WARDS INSTITUTE; HOLT ORPHANAGE; CON SON ISLAND; AND MR-3.

5. IN ADDITION TO THE LUNCHEON AND SESSION WITH PRESIDENT THIEU NOVEMBER 1, THE GROUP TOOK PART IN THE MEMORIAL CEREMONY AT THE MILITARY CEMEMTARY AND ATTENDED FOREIGN MINISTER BAC'S OFFICIAL NATIONAL DAY DINNER FOR THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS.

6. THE GROUP PARTICIPATED IN LIVELY FASHION IN INFORMAL DISCUSSION DURING ITS CALLS AND VISITS. POINTS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST WERE: THE CURRENT MILITARY SITUATION; THE IMPACT OF REDUCED US AID, SPECIFICALLY THE CORRELATION BETWEEN AMMUNITION LEVELS AND RVNAF CASUALTY LEVELS (ADMIRAL VANZANDT ASSERTED ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS THAT THE FACT OF LESS AMMO INVOLVING MORE GVN CASUALTIES SHOULD BE A VERY TELLING ARGUMENT WITH CONGRESS.); RVNAF MORALE AND FIGHTING CAPABILITY; THE SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO RVNAF VETERANS (THE GROUP SEEMED IMPRESSED WITH THE PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS THAT WERE DESCRIBED TO THEM.); AND THE SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO REFUGEES AND ORPHANS. CON SOL ISLAND WAS ESPECIALLY INTERESTING TO THE EX-POWS, BOTH GENERALLY AND SPECIFICALLY, AS A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 SAIGON 14031 071139Z

STANDARD COMPARISON WITH THEIR FORMER POW SITUATIONS. THEY FOUND THE PRISON FACILITIES TO BE PHYSICALLY COMPARABLE, IN MANY CASES EVEN IDENTICAL (NOT SURPRISING SINCE CON SON AND THE PRISONS IN THE DRV WERE BUILT BY THE FRENCH). HOWEVER, THE CON SON PRISONERS APPEARED BETTER FED, AND THEIR TREATMENT SEEMED MANIFESTLY BETTER THAN OUR POWS HAD EXPERIENCED. FOR EXAMPLE, CON SON PRISONERS ARE ABLE TO WORK IF THEY WISH, AND IF A PRISONER ACHIEVES WHAT WE WOULD CALL TRUSTY STATUS HE IS GIVEN COMPARABLE LATITUDE.

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

A FAR CRY WE WERE TOLD FROM THE SITUATION OF OUR POWS. AT THE OTHER END OF THE CON SON SCALE, THE TROUBLESOME PRISONERS ARE PUT IN SMALL CELLS FOR, IT WAS STATED, NO MORE THAN TWO WEEKS AT A TIME. THE EX-POWS ASKED TO SEE INSIDE SEVERAL OF THESE CEELS, AND WHEN THE DOORS WERE OPENED EACH CONTAINED TWO TO FOUR PRISONERS, FAR DIFFERENT FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR POWS WHO HAD SPENT MONTHS OR EVEN YEARS IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT.

7. THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE PRESS INTEREST WHEN THE GROUP ARRIVED OCTOBER 27, WITH ALL THE WIRE SERVICES PRESENT. THERE WAS, HOWEVER, NO UNUSUAL PRESS PLAY DURING THE COURSE OF THEIR STAY, ALTHOUGH ONE INACCURATE AP REPORT CARRIED HERE IN FRIDAY'S STARS AND STRIPES STATED THAT AN APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT THIEU HAD BEEN CANCELLED BECAUSE OF DEMONSTRATION IN SAIGON. THIS IS FALSE. IN FACT, THE TRIP TO CON SON, REQUESTED BY THE GROUP, LED TO CANCELLATION OF THE THURSDAY THIEU APPOINTMENT SINCE THE GROUP WOULD SEE HIM FRIDAY.

8. THE VETERANS' LEADERS ALL PLAN TO REPORT TO THEIR RESPECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS ON THEIR VIET NAM VISIT. ADDITIONALLY, WE UNDERSTAND SEVERAL OF THEM PLAN TO MAKE SPEECHES ABOUT THEIR IMPRESSIONS, PERHAPS IN CONJUNCTION WITH NOVEMBER 11 CEREMONIES. MESSRS. VANZANDT AND BURDINE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED THIS.

9. MEMBERS OF THE GROUP FOUND THAT THEIR INDIVIDUAL IMPRESSIONS PRIOR TO VISITING SOUTH VIET NAM WERE NOT CONSISTENT WITH THE SITUATION HERE. FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE BASE, RELYING ON NEWSPAPER AND MEDIA SOURCES, THEY WERE SURPRISED, THEY SAID, TO FIND SAIGON SO ORDERLY AND PEACEFUL.

10. IMPRESSIONS DEVELOPED DURING THE WEEK BY THE GROUP CAN BE SUMMED UP AS FOLLOWS:
--THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARE AWARE THAT THEY HAVE SERIOUS PROBLEMS,
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

INCLUDING CORRUPTION, BUT THEY ARE MAKING SERIOUS AND CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS TO COPE. (ONE OF THE GROUP SAID HE HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED BY THE HIGH CALIBER AND DEDICATION OF THE "MIDDLE ECHELONS" HE HAD MET.)
--INSOFAR AS THEIR FATE DEPENDS ON THEIR EFFORTS, HOWEVER, THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GIVE EVIDENCE THAT THEY POSSESS THE WILL AND THE DETERMINATION TO SURVIVE.
--MORE US AID IS NEEDED IN ORDER TO PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE LEVEL OF US SUPPORT UNDER THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES.
THE CONCLUSION OF ONE OF THE VETERANS' LEADERS ABOUT THE US AND VIET NAM WAS THAT AFTER SO MUCH US EXPENDITURE (OF BOTH MEN AND MONEY) IT WOULD BE A TERRIBLE SHAME TO REACH A SITUATION WHERE "FOR WANT OF A NAIL".
MARTIN

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SAIGON14031
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740320-0469
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741163/aaaacbbc.tel
Line Count: 168
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13-Aug-2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <27 MAR 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT TO VIET NAM OF VETERANS' LEADERS AND EX-POWS
TAGS: OVIP, VS
To: STATE DOD
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005